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SONGS OF LONDON

A MEDLEY GRAVE AND GAY

BY HERBERT A. FURST



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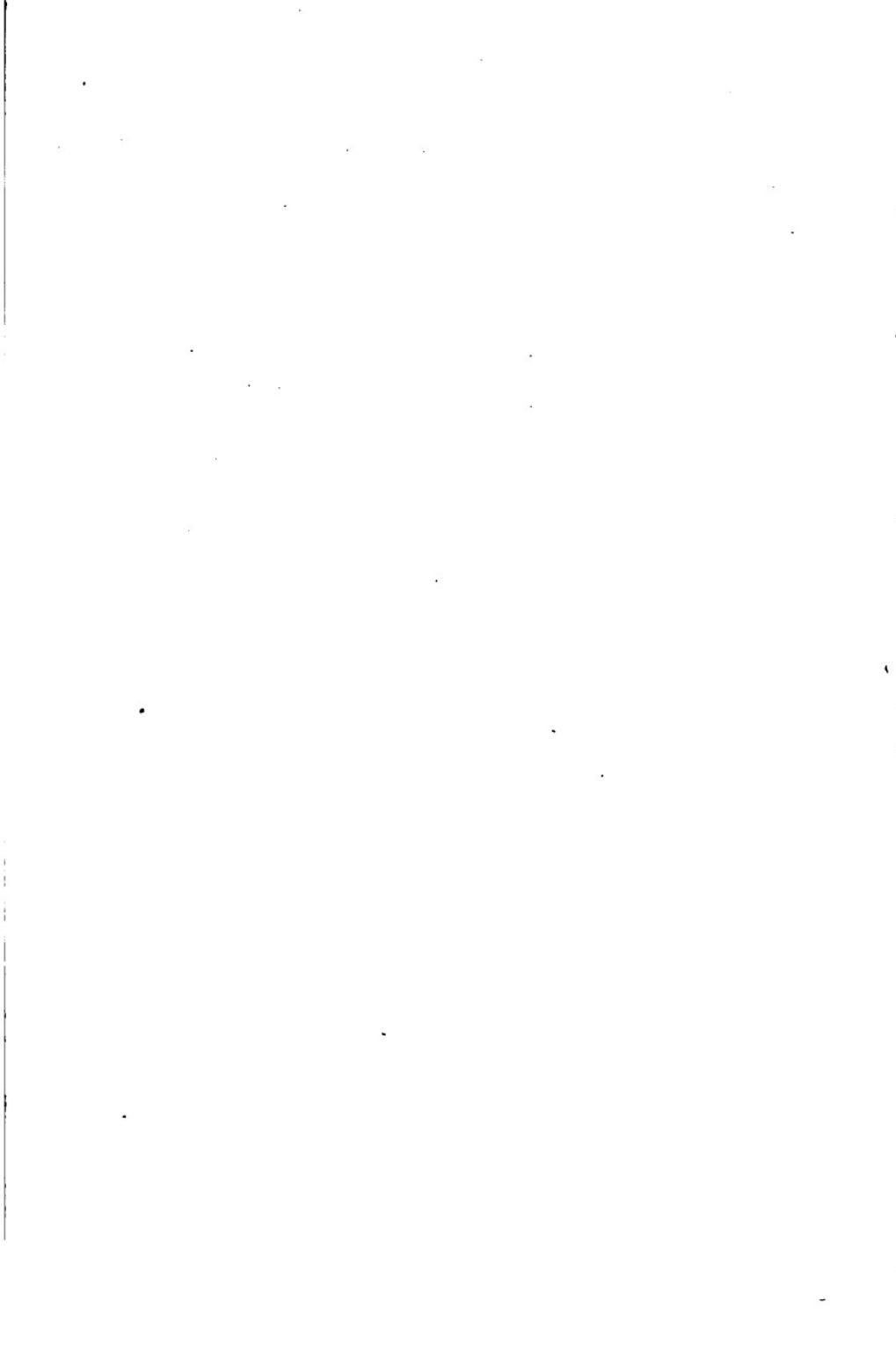
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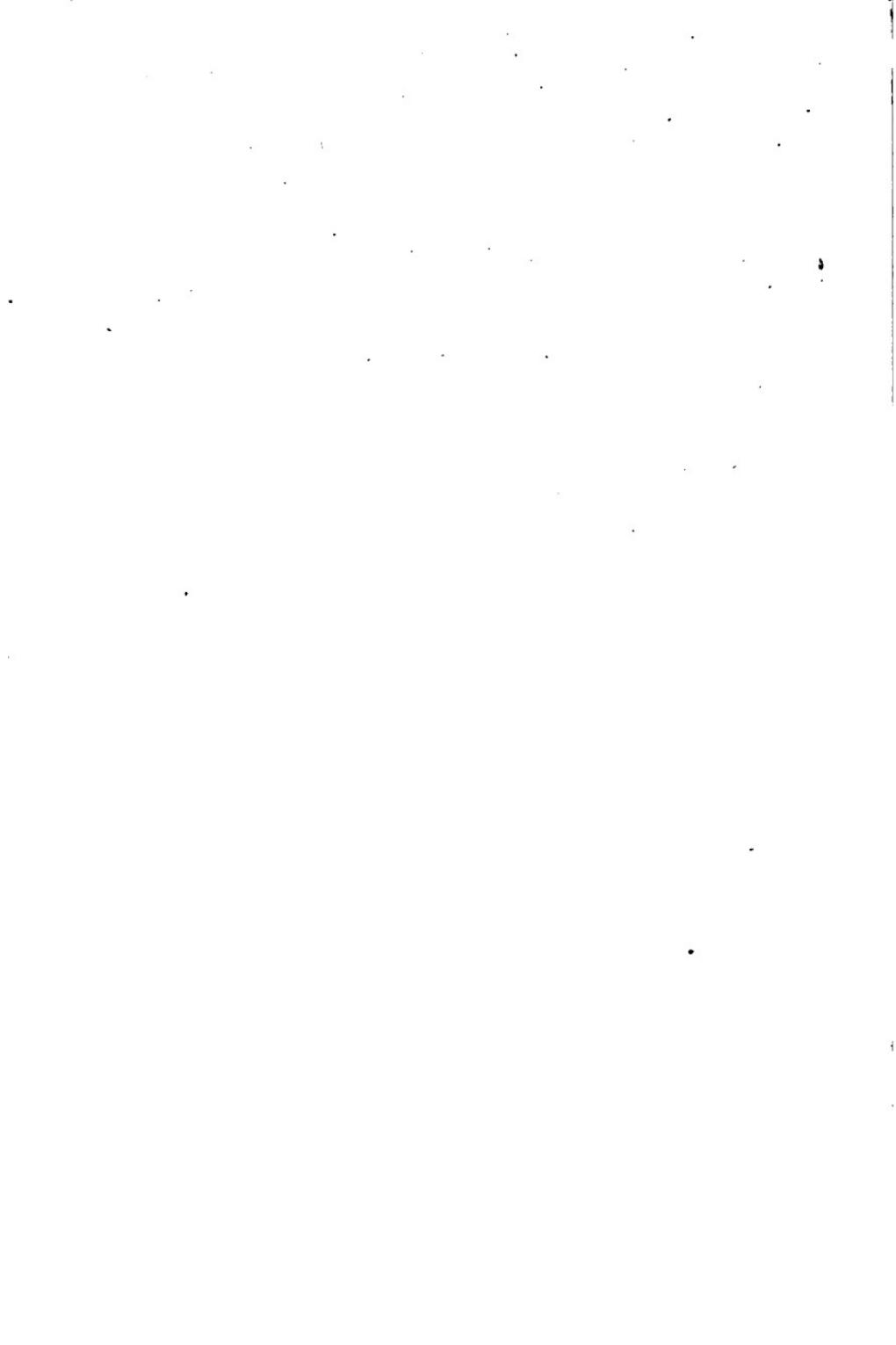
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SONGS OF LONDON



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A MEDLEY GRAVE AND GAY
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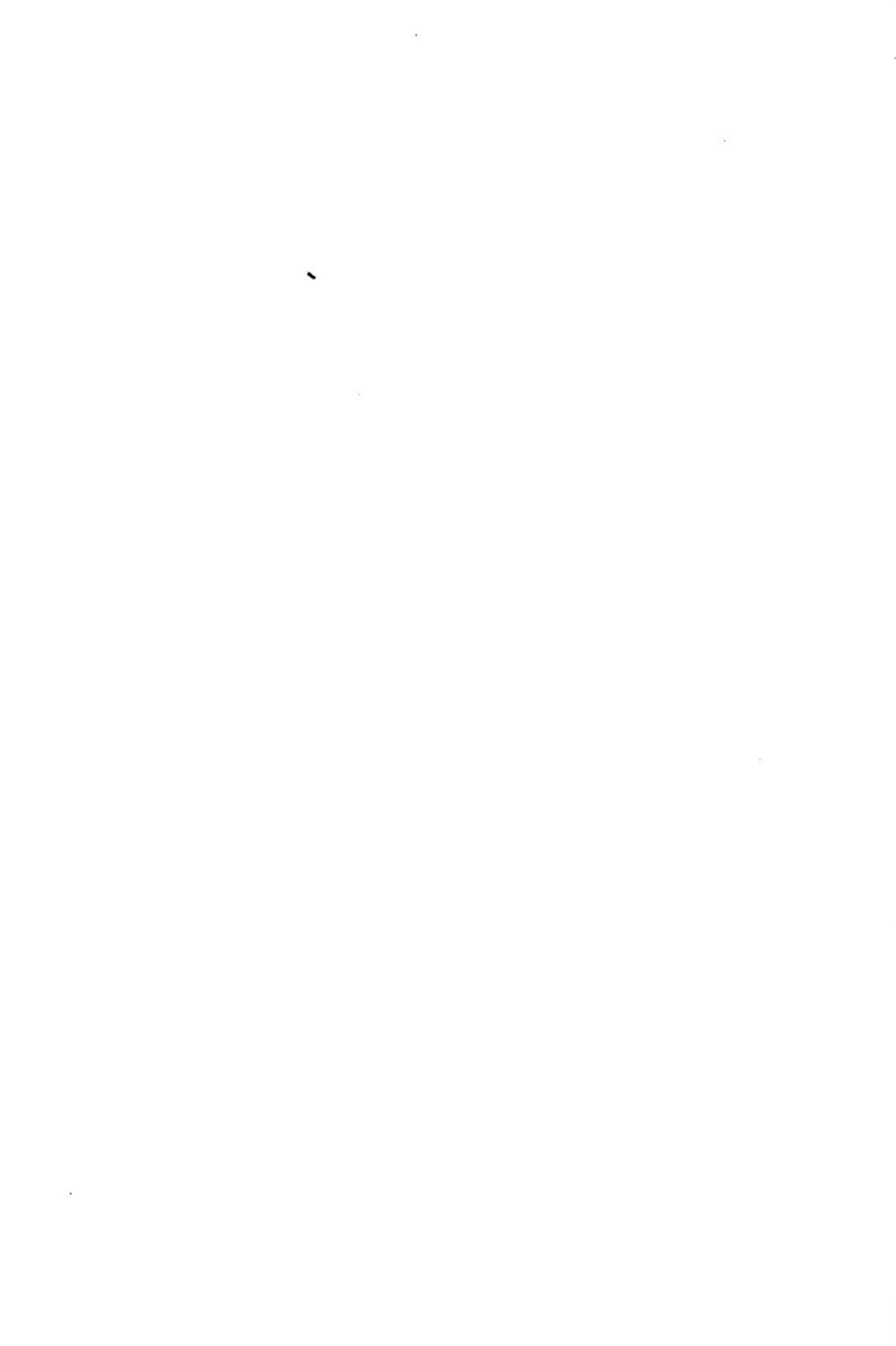
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**TO MY BROTHER
WALDY**



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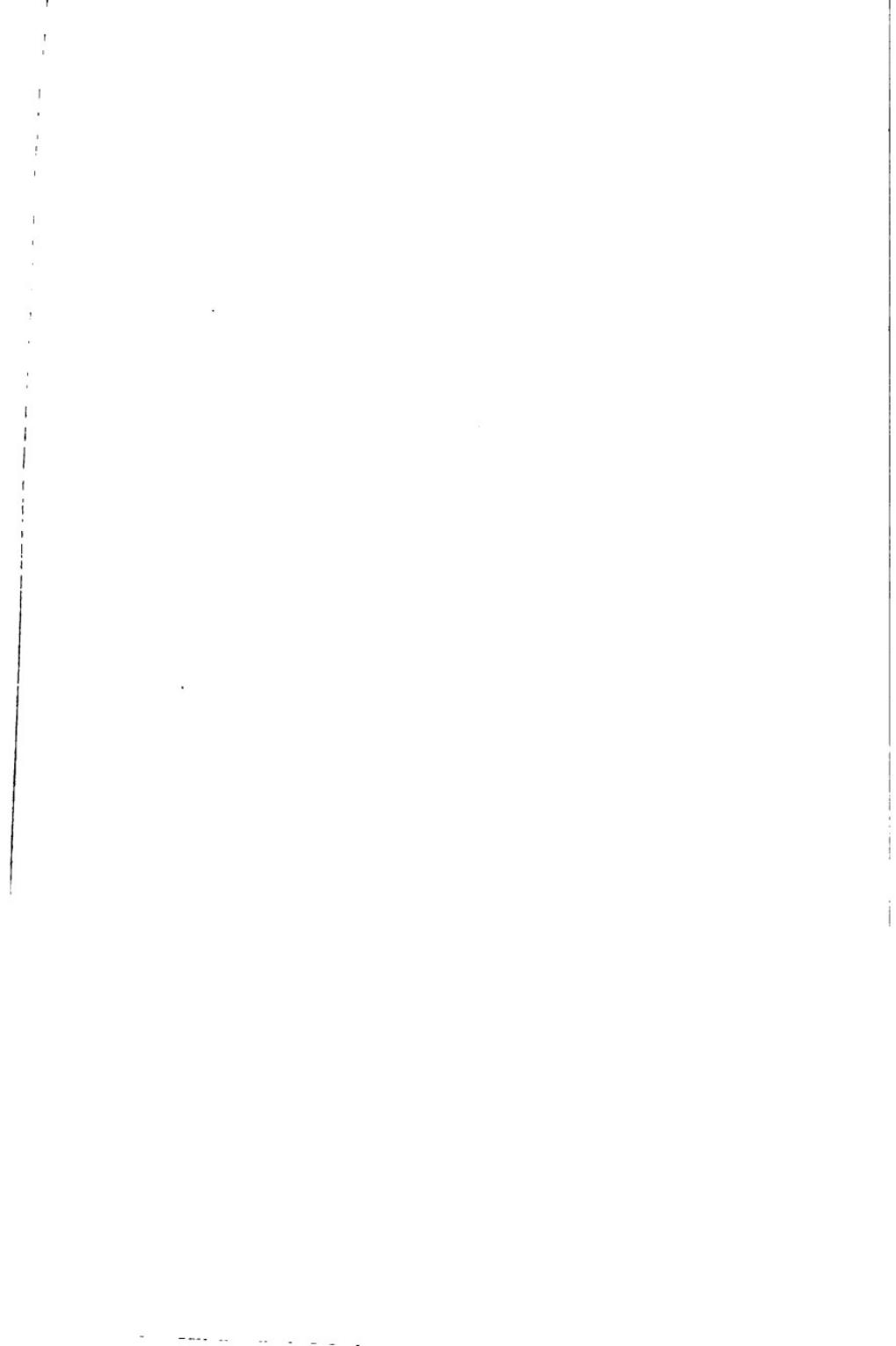
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PEGASUS UNHARNESSED

*FOLLOW me !
I am free.*

*I wend my ways whither I list,
Down into the abysses of sorrow,
Up to the bright heavens of hope,
Through the fair sweet vales of love,
Over rippling brooks of happiness,
Along the tow-paths of necessity,
By the cool shores of reason,
Whither I list I wend my way.
Like a whispering wind,
Like a bantering breeze,
Like a howling storm,
There is no one to deny me.
Let the fetter'd scoff and fools resent me,
Over their heads I unfold my wings.*

*I am free :
Follow me !*



SONGS OF LONDON

WESTMINSTER PRECINCTS

THE streets, a-roar with boisterous noise
 Of rattling carts, of motor-gas exploding,
Of ugly horns, tooting pneumatically,
Of cogwheel'd grating cranes
And the hoarse chant of news-boys,
Hide all their busy-ness in veils of dust.
An ancient square receives us,
And din and turmoil quietly subside,
Dying away beneath dark arches.
Westminster precincts.
Lo ! behold a murmuring fountain
Plashing a melody in cloister'd court.
A plane-tree spreading naked arms
And dangling spiky fruit of yesteryear
From off its March-chill'd fingers
'Gainst the pale-temper'd blue of England's sky.
Stillness of ages ! Hark ! A choral song.
Boys' seraph notes, men's sombre harmonies

Weaving a hymn like dew-kissed gossamer,
Around and in and out of this still court. . . .
Take off your hat, my friend, and bow your head,
Here past is present, and the present dead.

(By kind permission of the Editor
of the *Windsor Magazine*.)

FROM A WINDOW

FROM a window I can see, just opposite,
A blank wall—a few square yards of bricks
and mortar

Bricks and mortar—nothing else,
Nothing else.

Bricks, dull bricks, dull mortar,
A few square yards, a blank wall
Just opposite that window.

Light is life !

Colour is light.

A myriad million little elves swirl, hurl, and whirl
Around these bricks, around the binding mortar.

There are sombre grey ones hiding in every crevice,
There are little pompous ones in scarlet,

There are sad maiden ones in purple
Hiding in quiet nooks ; there are dapper knights
in gold

Craning their necks over every ridge,
Seeking the maids in purple.

There is commonfolk in many shades of brown ;
There are boisterous boys in rich reflected green
Tumbling and sprawling and falling across the
surface ;

There are quiet fellows in blue, watching contemplatively ;

There is the monastic brotherhood of mortar,
Clad in grey discipline of duty, law, and order,
Except where here and there some old ones have
doffed

Their hoods and show their iv'ry heads.

Great things happen when the sun goes down.

Then swirl the golden knights their crimson ladies ;
Faster and faster they dance, a reeling riot of reds,
Till they sink, exhausted from this dance of death.
Night comes—and the dark brothers of charity
Cover the red rioters—now pale and dead.

But on moonlight nights their ghosts awake and
dance

A pallid, ghostly minuet of faded light

From a window I can see, just opposite,
A blank wall

THE THAMES**NEAR LONDON BRIDGE****I**

EBB tide, slow waters and a leaden sky,
The Thames is cowed, and stealthily
Does bear the burdened barges to the sea.
A dead'ning dulness shrouds the beating heart
As dark'ning shadows gather near the bridge,
The shades of those who died here in despair
Watching and waiting for the tide to turn.
Ebb tide. . . .

II

The Sun is out, and the Tide is in,
And the Clouds and the waves are Kith and Kin ;
The frothing steamers are gliding along,
And the shaking sails sing a boist'rous song ;
The sunshine sparkles on bridges and banks,
The Tide has turned, to God be thanks.
The Tide, the Tide is flowing.

SANDWICH-MEN

FLIP—flop,
Flip—flop ;
Down the street,
Weary feet
In the gutter.
Utter, utter,
Ruin—ruin ;
Pride—pride
Gone—gone ;
Hope—hope
None—none.
Lost—lost.
Sunk—sunk.

Poor blighted men, that you should come to this,
Whose sordid lips once knew a mother's kiss :
Poor blighted hearts, that drive with hopeless beats
Dull, famished souls along the callous streets.
Benighted spirits ! are you too unbrave
To woo the solace of a friendly grave ?

ROTTEN ROW

GOD in His kindness made the sky blue,
And set the clouds off from it white and
brilliant ;

He deck'd the trees with whispering foliage,
And made the green grass soft and luscious,
And the joyousness of flowers overgreat.

Was it in kindness too that God made man ?

Was it ?

I don't know ;
Here's the Row.
You are quaint,
Quite a saint.
How decide
As we ride ?
Why embark
In the park
On a theme
So extreme.
That's Lord Fry
Just gone by.
There, of course,
The white horse
Of Lord Pett ;
He's in debt,
The old buck :

Rotten luck :
Ruined quite
In one night.
Did you see
Lady Leigh ?
Who was this ?
Did you miss
Lady Wye's
Pretty eyes ?
Have you heard
How absurd :
Lady Hyde
Rides astride ?
Have you seen
That Miss Green
With Lord Gray ?
Lady Gray
Gone away,
No divorce.—
Why of course
We'll return
If you burn
To get back.
You look black !
You are quaint,
Quite a saint.

Was it in kindness too that God made man ?
Was it?

REGENT STREET

A FEARFUL destiny, they say, awaits humanity
The time of woman's dominance,
Of man's decay.

**Εσσεται Ήμαρ!* Let me be dead.
Meanwhile 'tis good to be alive,
'Tis good to be in London town,
Perchance to walk in Regent Street,
On a fine spring morn.
It gives one bracing hope to see
That woman still can woman be—
To scan the crowds on either side,
To watch the flowing human tide :
A wilderness
Of woman and dress.

Pretty, dainty, ugly, old,
Meek and mincing, glib and bold,
Frowsy, frumpy, fair and fast
All with a future, some with a past,
Some in their dotage, some in their teens,
In black, white, purple, reds, blues, greens,
And the goods in the shops with their clangular cry
Of the slum street shopman's : buy—buy,
buy—buy.

'Tis really good to be in town,
Perchance to walk in Regent Street,
On a fine spring morn.

BOND STREET

TREMENDOUS questions vex this whirling world
Of right and wrong ; of social betterment,
Of God and nature, man and superman.
To answer these, Kong-fu-tse strove
In thrice three volumes ; Gautama
With four-fold noble truths,
Moses with tables of the law, and Christ
With word of evangelic love.
Yet hath the Sphinx not stirred.
For Oedipus—the great Enquiring Spirit
(Whose name is changed with ev'ry generation,
Whom thus we hail sometimes as Aristotle
Or—jumping aeons for a paradigm,
And naming names, name nameless energies—
Spinoza, Kant, or Schopenhau'r and Nietzsche
Or Bacon, Locke, or Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel)
For Oedipus th' eternal has not guessed,
Not yet—the riddle of this universe.
So, charmed this while by Homer, Dante, Shakespeare,
By Goethe, or mayhap by Bernard Shaw,
We sit and listen or we think and do,
For, like the Famulus of Doctor Faust,

We know a lot, yet wish that we knew all.—
Thus then I see the world a busy workshop,
Incessantly astir to gain perfection
In all the things that matter to the world.
But things that matter to the world,
Such count for nought in Bond Street,
For Bond Street hath a law unto itself !
Says Faust, the prototype of modern man :
In the Beginning, was there not the Word ?
But Bond Street answers—Faust, thou art absurd.
In the Beginning there was not the Word ;
I tell it you sans irony or passion,
In the Beginning there was Fashion.
And all that matters, let me state in brier,
Is just an evolution of the leat
That Eva wore in Paradise.

AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN PICCADILLY

AUBERON DE VERE SOLILOQUISES

MY man, with very little trouble,
Has done his best—
Clean-shaven, I,
With morning coat
And patent leather shoes,
My trousers prest,
My tie
Tied faultlessly,
From Half-Moon Street emerge,
With silk hat and my cane,
Correct and dignified,
To walk down Piccadilly to the club.
The sun is shining,
And my world is fill'd
With joy and satisfaction.
I'm fairly young,
Considering that I'm nearly fifty-five.
Poole is my tailor,
And my hatter Heath.
The sun is shining,

And I'm walking to my club :
I, I—let urbs it note and orbs—
I'm — — — — — —
— — — — — —
— walking to my club
In Piccadilly.

MY GARDEN

GREEN sward, trim hedges, and a flood of
bloom,

Such is my garden—not.

Instead :

Well, first of all

A sooty gray brown wall

In front, and yet, and yet, a wall

On either side.

A lanky agéd elm tree

Struggles aimlessly,

And hangs its boughs in great disorder

Over the western wall

Into my garden,

Strewing in spring the ground

With bud-coats,

And in autumn with dead twigs.

Next I will mention

An anaemic ash,

And after that a famished lilac bush

Say three or four feet high,

And likewise ailing.

The soil is clay, but largely mingled

With bricks and potsherds,

Tins and bits of glass.
Also I've found it to contain
The bones of some dead cat
And eke a silken bodice :
(Since then I ever leave the sod unturned.)
I've planted marguerites and red geranium ;
They shudder when I set them in the ground,
Soon droop and soon are dead.
Virginia creeper too I tried to grow,
But since the soil is poor, my parasite
Scorns hospitality and cedes the ground
To jumping jacks, who thrive assiduously.

I fear me there's a secret buried here
Which feeds and fattens all the slimy worms
Disgustingly.

WHITEHALL**THE SENTINELS OF ENGLAND**

I'VE had a vision friends ! Some News from
Nowhere,
And William Morris sent it me :
In the year two thousand, two hundred and three
(When there shall be no more of you and me,
Than a few scatter'd traits, and a few scatter'd
thoughts
Dark heirlooms of a long-forgotten mind)
There will be *pax profunda*—perfect peace.
Ohé what sleepy times they'll have
When all are good (and none are brave),
And each a master, none a slave.
Each home will reek of kindness
And laughter, love and lavender.
Ohé for the millennium !
Ask William Morris, he doth know
That everything will be just so,
Just so—says William Morris :
The bank will be a market hall,
The mansion-house a coffee-stall,
And Cripplegate a meadow ;

Lincoln's Inn Fields a ploughshare tills,
In Fleet Street they pick daffodils,
And pears in Piccadilly.

All, all must change (or *πάντα ῥει*)
Says ancient Greek philosophy.
But one thing changeth never :
Let England rise, or England fall,
The mounted sentries of Whitehall
Shall stand on guard for ever.

LONDON, E.

(FROM THE GREAT EASTERN)

AND Satan slammed the Gates of Hell.

Go, take the Tunnel on the left, said he ;
The End of which is where I join thee next.

A smell of sulphur—Beelzebub was gone.

I walk along a dark and clammy path
Till I emerge once more into the light,
Upon a platform—high and damp and cold.

A drizzling rain soon soaks my very bones ;
Cold blows the wind :
I'm waiting.

So far as I can see are roofs and chimney pots,
And squalid streets,
And lumbered yards, with here and there some
washing

Hung (in the wet) to dry.

But people—there are none,
Unless you care to call some wretches
Ragg'd, dismal, and forlorn,
People indeed.

The clouds stand still, and shed incessantly
Ironic waters over all the scene.

My wearied pulse beats low, my heart grows chill.
Now Satan comes with scowls and heavy frowns ;
I thank my fate for hope of Satan's Grill.
We leave, but where we met were
Hackney Downs.

GERUSALEMME LIBERATA

I

WHITECHAPEL

Psalm cix. 22. For I am poor and needy and my heart
is wounded within me.

HUNGRY is Jacob Salaman, and in his heart
afraid—
Afraid of all the Gentiles, which is natural,
Since 'tis but half a day that he is here
In Christian Street—a part of Whitechapel.
He eyes suspiciously with half-closed lids,
Turning his head away, a burly policeman
As fair and clean and straight
As he is crooked, dark, and dirty.
For hungry Jacob Salaman intends,
When the forbidding man in blue has gone,
To take himself a sorely needed meal
Somehow from off a near and tempting stall,
For which indeed he will not have to pay,
So he be quick. But Jacob Salaman
Mistrusts himself, for there is too much light
In London streets for such an one as he,

Who but a night or two ago lay hid,
With terror-stricken heart and whip-sore back,
In some unhappy ghetto of a town
In dark and mediaeval Russian lands.
Poor hungry, dirty, cassock'd Salaman !

II

MAIDA VALE

Psalm cxxiv. 7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of fowlers.

Says Mrs. Salaman, our Jacob's wife,
Unto her husband, as they promenade
On a fine Saturday in summer-time,
Moving her ample form along the road
That leads to Edgware (here call'd Maida Vale) :
“ Jacob ! 'tis much too hot ; I really think
We ought to take the little ones away
(Morris, remove your finger from your mouth,
And Lea, *do* walk straight, my precious dear)
To Margate, say, or else perhaps Southend.”
And ample Jacob doffs his silken hat
And wipes the perspiration off his brow :
“ No ! Mrs. Salaman, we can't do that,
I'm on the verge of bankruptcy just now.”

III

PARK LANE

Psalm xiii. 6. I will sing unto the Lord because he
has dealt bountifully with me.

*Tis May—and all the hyacinths in bloom,
The park is green and gay, and in his room,
Drumming a window, looking on Park Lane,
Stands Salaman, and waits, but not in vain.
For as he hums and drums (his thoughts grow bold,
He thinks of Christian Street and days of old)
There comes a ring ('tis not long since
That *he* was hungry, now—) it is the *Prince*.

A DANCE OF THE MUSES IN PRINCES ROAD, NOTTING HILL

NINE little girls, grubby little girls,
In dirty frocks, in tattered frocks ;
Eighteen naked, dirty little feet,
Dirty little feet,
Dancing on Parnassus.

Parnassus, aye ! Parnassus, aye !
The sun is gone, the sky is gray ;
No grass, no tree, but just a street—
A pauper's street—
In glum and slummy London.

They dance, they fling in graceful swing
Their naked feet, their naked feet.
No citherns, flutes, nor pipes nor lutes,
Nor cymbals, no ;
But just a barrel organ.

Those little girls, those grubby girls,
Do keep their time with ease sublime ;
And yonder dusky organ man,
Forsooth ! is he
Apollon Musagetes ?

(By kind permission of the *Windsor Magazine*.)

EROS AND PSYCHE

HOW strange the disguise you are wearing,
oh Cupid, oh Psyche !
He is a navvy, forsooth, unshaven and stolid,
She is a factory girl with feathers and earrings ;
She with her hands on her back, whilst he by her
shoulders
Holdeth the girl of his choice, their mouths glued
together
Drinking the nectar of love ; Elysian couple !
'Arry is Cupidon's name, and 'Arriet Psyche's ;
Arcades ambo this pair, and Arcadia : Deptford.

A WINKLE-STALL

A BRIGHT-GREEN barrow
On bright-green wheels,
And the white barrow top o'erspread
With parsley ;
Two dozen little dishes neatly filled
With mussels,
And on the left-hand side a heaping pile
Of winkles ;
Four chimney'd candles in a crystal row
With pots
Of salt and pepper rangèd on the front,
And testy
Were they who grumbled at such happy taste.

.

To try a winkle, madam, would you care ?
Of course not, madam ; no ! you do complain
Of the surroundings, and of such a fare.
You like your oysters, madam, with champagne—
Your little fishes
On silver dishes,
Still ! still ! !—
Since ever man from other beast was ta'en,

Since he to higher rank aspired,
He has a special taste acquired.
And—you share yours with any Mary Jane—
Spoil not your brow with frowning wrinkles.
We can no longer live on bread alone,
We—the conclusion is foregone—
We *all* need “winkles.”

THE "KING'S HEAD"

(LONDON, E., S., N., OR W.)

*So God created man in His own image,
In the image of God created He him,
Male and female created He them.*

THE night is damp and cold,
The "King's Head" dank and warm,
Its steaming windows barely alight
With the cold greenish light of incandescent burners.
Inside, the bar is busy with drinking, shouting, singing men
In corduroys and knee-straps.
A woman, followed by a boy of four,
And holding in her arm an infant
Wrapt in a shawl, her skirt
Dragging behind and raised in front
By reason of the double life she bears,
Approaches, shadow-like, the "King's Head" doors
And peers; then hoarsely mutters: Bill!
No answer. Her raised voice now repeats
The word, and as the noise abates
She cries the word again: the doors swing out
And Bill appears, the clay-pipe in his mouth.

He makes no answer, but with glassy eyes
Stares into darkness—torrents of abuse
Pour from the woman's lips, words that defile
The speaker's mouth and all the others' ears.
The man says nothing, but a well-aimed kick
Ends her abuse in silence. Then he takes his pipe
Out of his lips and spits, and turns inside.

Now people congregate—
Shouts, screams, and uproar !
The policeman on the beat reluctantly approaches—
Used to it all. He sounds his whistle.
The woman on the ground groans,
And the little one cries “mother.”

THE CHURCH OF THE CARMELITES

(KENSINGTON)

New Year's Eve

IT was the last night of a weary year,
And passing by the Church of Carmelites
A half-forgotten voice within me spake :
 Come unto Me.
It fell like rain upon the thirsting land.
And gratefully did I come—
The church was warm and light and fragrant
With Asia's mind-enslaving frankincense—
Scarce had I doffed my hat, when I was asked
To pay for privilege of church and pew :
They barter Gospel truth for silver coin,
They sell Redemption at the price of pork.

I fled into the night, and all the stars
Intoned a silent sacred song of love.

THE BANK

TWO HORIZONS

SAYETH my friend, standing close by the bank,
The squat old lady of Threadneedle Street,
Raising his hand in bursting eloquence,
And conquering the hubbub with his voice :
“ Friend ! this is holy ground ;
Here you behold
Britannia’s mightiness ;
This is the centre of a universe,
The starting point—the finish of a race
Run daily from the times of Boadicea
With endless energy and growing pace.
Here watch the beating pulse, the throbbing
heart
Of this great realm of ours, and you must feel
A thrill of satisfaction as you stand
And see pulsating round you all this life ;
It swells my breast with great and proper pride
To think, to say, indeed : I too am British.”

Quoth I :

“ And British too are yonder garden tubs
That hold imprison’d those few famish’d
shrubs ;

And British too is yonder scarlet vest
And pinkish coat wherewith the Bank has drest
Her messengers in fiendish combination ;
And British too the pale and harasst cheek
Of all this city folk, and British too
Is the polluted air, the sooty hue
Of bank, exchange, and pompous mansion-
house,
Supposing, friend, your word be true and terse,
And this the Centre of a Universe,
This centre, then, in British I would spell
With H and E and with a double L.”

NURSERY WALK**KENSINGTON GARDENS**

A NICELY gravelled walk
Lined either side by cage-like fences,
Behind which dainty flowers
Deport themselves in gaily coloured gowns ;
Respectable and prim and carefully tended,
Sheltered from winds by guardian trees and
bushes.

This little proper avenue is peopled
In spring and early autumn,
In summer too perhaps,
By many nurses, who perambulate
Their dainty charge in carriages
Of white or blue or tan,
Whilst tiny little gentlemen and ladies,
Pink cheek'd and fair of skin,
With auburn, black or golden hair,
Cling toddling to their skirts,
Each little hand kid-glov'd.
On days like these the sun himself
Sends no more heat than is agreeable,
And none but tiny gusts of wind

Descend to toy with little baby curls,
And every passing shower fain would stop,
To scatter into dew-pearls every drop.

Yes ! 'tis a great thing to be born and bred
A gentleman ! a lady !

What think you, urchins, with the dirty hands
And running nose and matted hair
Who trespass on preserves of Gentlefolk
And gaze in vain ?

Why did the good God make
For them the sun,
For you the rain ?

THE LAW COURTS AND THE OLD BAILEY

THE LAW COURTS

GRAY is the building like all theory,
A gray confused Gothic pile,
A jungle that of bricks and mortar
Peopled by curious animals in wigs
Who live on letters, thrive on twisted words.
If you must enter here, leave hope without,
For jumbled as this edifice appears,
'Tis nothing to the labyrinth of words
Wherein the bobwigged Minotaurs entrap,
"Twixt "I submit, My Lord!"—"Your Lordship
 pleases!"
Their victims.

THE OLD BAILEY

But if you long for gayer company,
Let us make friends in Newgate with "Old Bailey."
A splendid fellow 'struth Old Bailey is,
In all the glory of his new array,
The very Bumble of all Bumbledom.

The King's Bench or the Chancery Judge
He doth despise, and says but "Fudge"
To all their arguments.
His arguments will never fail,
The first of which is "jail—jail—jail,"
The second simply "rope."
It's an excellent counsel, a capital plan,
To catch and to hang your criminal man.
It's an excellent plan, but the criminal man
Is he the man that is hang'd?

ENVOI

Old Bailey is a husbandman
Of reasoning somewhat curious,
Of knowledge somewhat spurious.
 He snips and clips
 Off every shoot,
 But never tampers
 With the root,
 Not ever.

NEW LONDON**ALDWYCH**

BRAVE city—wreath thyself in smiles,
Don merry garments, deck thyself with jewels ;
Why shew the world the myriad miseries
That thou inheritedst ?
Take heart in thine own beauty ;
Grow beautiful and thou must needs grow good,
Grow good and thou must needs be true,
And thus thy beauty shall no longer lie.

A PASSER-BY

COMING down the street,
A woman in black,
Wearing apparel
That once long, long ago was new :
A black bonnet framing a face that once
Long, long ago was beautiful.
Her hair, now white, curtains a noble forehead ;
Her nose still testifies to gentle parentage ;
Her eyes, her eyes ?
But who would willingly
Sound the deep depths of such despair
As have undone a mind which still must bear
Life's burden ?
Her quivering lips are uttering words
Unceasingly.
What is it that so troubles her dark soul ?
What is it ?

Why bother, say you, about some poor old mad and
dirty creature ?
Sheer waste of time, besides a very common feature
Of ev'ry street, in any city, any land,
In almost any clime. I know all that, my friend,

All that I know : 'tis as you say,
One meets them every day
In every city,
Such saddened, maddened, wand'ring souls in black.
But, friend—*that* is the Tragedy.

THE CALEDONIAN CATTLE-MARKET**A FIND**

TIS Friday : chattels they sell and goods,
to-day, not cattle.
A queer crowd, curious to behold, who stand and
gaze,
And push, through noisy Market-Hall and open
Mart.
What stuff they sell ! Whence can this rubbish
hail ?
For at first sight it seems just one gigantic spread
From hundred-thousand rubbish-laden dust-bins.
Shade of Walt Whitman, what delight you'd find !
Hammers and saws, screws, gimlets, rusty keys,
Door-handles, pinchers, spades and candlesticks,
Pictures and vases, chinacups and plates,
Tin-cans and pots and pans, jugs, mugs and dishes,
Sofas, chairs, cushions, coverlets and curtains,
Stockings, socks, boots, hats, petticoats and breeches,
Lamps, brackets, gasoliers, kettles and fenders,
Flutes, fiddles, spinets, plaster busts and figures,
Coal-scuttles, clubs and spears, muskets and swords,
Padlocks and jemmies, sickles, scythes and chisels,

Caskets and paper-weights, prismatic glass
From chandeliers; old tables, cabinets and fire-arms,
Shell boxes, lockets, seals, plush-mounted views on
glass,

Books, tailors' dummies, bed-pans, knives and forks,
Strange ornaments of china, lead, or brass,
Wrenched, heaven knows from where? what for?
All these are jumbled up, and mixed and spread
again,

All grimy, broken, bent, and sorely spoilt
By many, if not lawful, owners.

Here is a jewel-box of inlaid wood, with dainty lock.
Inside, pale button'd silk and, still, a faded roseleaf.
Here is a book, 'tis Johnson's Rasselas,
Inscribed in brownish ink: To Julia from a Friend:
Love lingers still on rose- and paper-leaves.

Here is another book: quaintly entitled
*The Pantheon: Representing Fab'lous Hist'ries
Of Heathen Gods and most Illustrious Heroes,
Written by Fra. Pomey of the Society of Jesus.*

*The Third Edition for the Use of Schools
Printed in London M·D·C·C·I.*

In it with sprawling girlish hand is writ:
Anne Dodd. Anne! doubtless thou didst care
Less for the heathen gods and all their heroes
Than for a blue-eyed living Christian lad.
What have we here? A spinet, mahogany inlaid

With brass, the ivory keys all brown.
Poor instrument, tuned once, no doubt,
To voice Scarlatti, now tortured by some youth
To strum ill-humor'dly : The Old Kent Road.
But here ! a picture gray with dust and dirt,
A head—a woman's head with powder'd hair.
It may be Reynolds, may be Gainsborough.
I pay ten shillings : 'tis a lucky find.
I'll have it clean'd, and, *if* the fates prove kind,
Sell it to someone, somewhere in Park Lane ;
Thus were this visit not indeed in vain
If, if—

STREET SINGERS

'TIS Saturday night in High Street ;
Suburbia is out in High Street :
The mothers are buying the Sunday meal,
All shops are serving the public weal,
By selling their wares much under cost—
For so they profess—one believes it almost :
So light and so bright
On a Saturday night
Are all things in Suburbia.
With its clamour and hustle,
Its glamour and bustle,
A cheerful sight
Is Saturday night :
Is Saturday night in Suburbia.

• • • • •

So loud
Is the crowd,
That the doleful strain
Of minstrels twain
Is lost in the turmoil almost.
'Tis a man with a tearful, beerful bass,
And a starving wife with a ginsoak'd face,

A child in a bundle of rags at her breast
(Like Death so pale—oh ! death were best).
Thus sadly along the road they creep,
A man and a woman with a child, asleep ;
Thus wearily tread the songful twain,
Repeating a sad and a bad refrain
From a Drawing-Room Ballad of long ago.
Won't you spare them a penny ? Oh, say not No !
To deny, were't not barbarity ?
Then cover your sins by charity.
Suburbia gives, and a grateful grin
From the woman foreshadows the fateful gin.

• • • • •

So all are happy on Saturday night.
Let down the shutters, turn out the light,
And buyers and beggars vanish from sight.
For night and charity cover the sore
That cover'd and hidden will fester the more.
A poisonous barbarity
Is charity,
YOUR charity !

ABBAS VITALIS

*A One-sided Argument with an Abbot of
Westminster*

THE AUTHOR ASLEEP ON A STONE SEAT IN THE
CLOISTERS OF THE ABBEY CLOSE BY THE
TOMB OF ABBAS VITALIS

ABBAS VITALIS, so I live !

What a surprise

To see a man dead, awaken and rise.

Is there any help that I can give ?

Shake the dust from your cowl ?

Pick up your staff ?

Why the frown and the scowl ?

Fain would I laugh.

Does the daylight hurt, as it would an owl ?

Ap age Satana, did you say,

Satan, friend Abbot, lives th'opposite way ;

I'd rather you spake your *amice ! pax tecum.*

Welcome, Friend Abbot, to time and to town.

Why can't you dispense with the scowl and the
frown ?

You look sad. Ah, I know that the gist of my speech

Is foreign to you, and out of your reach.
It's not Norman nor Saxon,
And must be a tax on
Your mental capacity
And grave-bound vivacity.
But since you stand up once more well and alive,
To teach one another we both must contrive.
Therefore, friend Abbot, now be it my task
To answer whatever question you ask.
I'll put in brief form an
I can my reply. About William the Norman
You wish me to tell.
You remember him well,
As you should, quite of course.
Well, he fell from his horse,
Wounded ; he died by an unlucky chance,
Having captured Mantes from Philip of France.
The cause of that noise ?
Why, newspaper boys
Announcing the winner ;
I forgot, Abbate, you are a beginner
In matters of moment ; but do not despair,
I'll tell you with pleasure each when, why, and
where ;
For, Abbot Vitalis,
Non es talis qualis
We of to-day.

Ay ? What do you say.
The year that we live in ?
The year of the Lord nineteen hundred and seven.
Let us venture outside,
And see for yourself the wonderful stride
We have made since the year
They have buried you here.—
Westminster and London 'tis all now one.
No ! feuds and fedities have we none ;
All is peace, and the Habeas Corpus Act
Preserves our persons safe and intact.
You stare at me, Abbot ? Of course ! I forgot :
Of parliamentary parlance nothing you wot.
What do you say—not thinking of that,
Merely admiring the shape of my hat
And the cut of my coat, or
My shoes.—Do you envy my feet ?
Ah ! here is the street ;
Beware of the motor.
Why, Abbot, you pale ; does the turmoil assail you,
And cause that your nerves should betray you and
fail you ?
Let us hie to my home in a cab, for to walk
You seem far too weak, and there let us talk.
What might a cab be ? Why a carriage for hire ;
Stop a minute, I'd better send off a wire
To cancel a previous and pressing appointment.

What is it, friend Abbot, you've missed what that
point meant?

You wait till we're settled in comfort in Chelsea
(I live there), and then I'll begin to explain
The world of to-day to you, then you may well
see

The reason of all that now puzzles your brain.
And, Abbot Vitalis, you mark my word well,
Whatever you think, and whatever you tell
Of the life of *your* time, of the truth of *your* day,
You will have to confess, that far and away
Our life is humaner and nobler and better,
And that, as a truth in meaning and letter,
Good seed that before you and by you was sown
Has dropt on good soil, has rooted and grown.
And withal, that eight hundred and twenty-five
years

Are a knot in the course that Humanity steers.
For Humanity, Abbot—another new truth,
Is, if not in infancy, still in its youth.
You liv'd in your time, I in another,
But both yours and mine are like brother and
brother.

Yours was the younger, mine is the older,
Mine is the wiser, yours was the bolder,
Yours was a child, mine but a boy,
Each treating the world as such would a toy,

Anxious to use or misuse it at will,
Making a god of it, making a clod of it,
Dreading the touch of it, making too much of it,
Searching its history, solving its mystery,
Never, but ever wondering still
What be the trend of it, what be the end of it ?
Abbot Vitalis, I'll answer for this,
Whatever the trend and the end of it is,
Man lives but for *man*, this point I discern,
Man lives for *this* world, and lives here to learn.
Bored with classic antiquity, seen with Christian
obliquity,
All modern humanity
Is sick of Christianity—

Oh ! Abbot Vitalis, what have I done ?
Stop, Abbot, stop, it was only in fun—
At least I mean—you're creating a scandal ;
This haste is unseemly, you're losing a sandal.
Are you seeking the abbey ?
Why, I do call that shabby.
You think me a knave
(He's seeking his grave).
Pray don't call a sin it
(He's found it, he's in it).

• • • • •

He's buried and dead.











